

## **Teaching Japanese Art to Australian Children in Japanese: How International, Cross-institutional, Interdisciplinary Collaboration can Enhance Learning Outcomes**

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### Introduction

Although language typically functions as a means rather than an end, in many language classrooms language as an end takes precedence over language as a means. The rigorous demands of externally imposed curricula and assessment regimes do not always encourage interdisciplinary efforts to integrate language and culture, nor to integrate language study with the content from other discipline areas. Nevertheless, interdisciplinary collaboration can enhance educational outcomes with the synergy that comes from combining diverse specializations as learning is expanded by crossing the boundaries between different communities of practice (Tsui & Law, 2007). This paper reports on a project in which language learning was extended beyond traditional views through a project to cross international boundaries, and develop an interdisciplinary teaching and learning program combining the subjects of Art and Japanese language study. The project on which this paper is based consisted of a five-week collaborative teaching program during which a teaching team comprising a Japanese university student with an Art major, and an Australian teacher of Japanese, co-taught Japanese art through the medium of Japanese to two classes of beginner Japanese language learners in their first year at an Australian high school.

### Adopting an Interdisciplinary Pedagogy

Interdisciplinary Pedagogy is principally the result of collaboration between specialists in their respective subjects. The term Interdisciplinary Pedagogy is used here rather than Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL), in order to foreground the pedagogical process at work in this case study. Definitions of CLIL are varied (Brown & Bradford, 2017) and it is regarded as an `eclectic` and `multifaceted` potpourri (Ball, Kelly & Clegg 2015 p.24). The current study is distinctive in that it concerns Japanese art pedagogy and languages pedagogy in an Australian setting, and therefore does not neatly conform to the various definitions of CLIL. Interdisciplinary Pedagogy refers to the innovative meshing of pedagogy from disparate educational traditions and discrete communities of practice, hence is a more appropriate framing for the present study.

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### *Collaboration in Interdisciplinary Pedagogy*

Barfield's (2016) definition of collaboration will be used here: "whatever its particular form, collaboration involves deciding goals together with others, sharing responsibilities, and working together to achieve more than could be achieved by an individual on their own" (p 222). Collaboration is critical to Interdisciplinary Pedagogy, because of the diverse specializations of the respective teachers. Individuals view the same situation and phenomena from different perspectives, and therefore discussion between teachers of the manner of instruction is critical (Hattie & Zierer, 2018).

Collaboration is beneficial because within this pedagogy no single teacher possesses all of the repertoire necessary to provide an optimal lesson. Crossing the boundaries of one's discipline is necessary in modern times when the transmission of information is so immediate (Tsui & Law, 2007). Collaboration is inherent in crossing those boundaries. In the case of a Japanese artist delivering an art lesson in Japanese to language learners in Australia, the teacher has subject-specific knowledge of art, but not necessarily of language learning pedagogy. Not only does each specialist bring subject specific knowledge to the collaboration, the interaction between those collaborating can generate new knowledge such as creating solutions to problems. Csikszentmihalyi (2013) describes "conversations that would bring out new ideas that could not arise in the minds of the single individuals but might arise as a result of the interaction" (p. 284). Hattie and Zierer (2018) discuss the notion of collective intelligence, attributing it to Aristotle's argument that "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts" (p.31). Furthermore, Bruner (1996) discusses the sharing of ideas in a community that promotes a distributed intelligence, "perhaps most important of all, the network of friends, colleagues or mentors on whom one leans for feedback, help, advice, even just for company" (p. 132).

### *Cross-Institutional Collaboration*

Beyond the discipline boundaries, collaboration can also extend beyond institutional boundaries. Calling for a higher level of collaboration with those outside a particular institutional context such as a school, Lee and Ward (2013) argue that the traditional insular classroom "has all but maximised its potential" (p.6). Another similar critique of schooling is made by Csikszentmihalyi (2013) in his exposition of creativity: "This breadth, this interest that overflows the limits of a given domain, is one of the most important qualities that current schooling and socialization are in danger of stamping out" (p. 329). Tsui and Law (2007) discuss collaboration between the respective communities of practice of the school and the university in their study of university teachers and student teachers on their practicums. They highlight the importance of crossing boundaries for learning, between domains which have previously been discrete, in order to enrich the experience for all involved.

### *E-collaboration*

E-collaboration expands the possibilities for communication because geographical distance means that traditional communication is not feasible. E-collaboration is often asynchronous; the time interval

between electronic exchanges affords the time for the participants to reflect and craft their responses (Ngo, Goldstein & Portugal, 2012). Most importantly, the participants are freed from the constraints of time and place that characterize face-to-face communication. Although there are clear advantages to face-to-face over electronic communication, such as facial expressions and vocalizations which provide immediate feedback (Crystal, 2004), the very limitations of e-communication may be turned to advantage when it allows the participants to use the time lag to plan their response.

### *Socio-cultural Approach and Mediation between Teacher and Student*

Collaboration is an essential element of Vygotsky's socio-cultural approach. The learner and the adult collaborate in the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), and this is internalized by the child, and leads to development (Pritchard, 2009). No matter how sophisticated the teaching materials, there is no substitute for teacher mediation (Hattie & Zierer, 2018). Accordingly, it would be insufficient to send Japanese art materials and explanations to the school in Australia. The mediation provided by the Japanese artist facilitates the development of the children's artistic and linguistic skills.

### *The Project*

This project comprised a collaborative case study using action research methodology. It involved multiple participants across a number of institutions, working together to create and enact an interdisciplinary teaching program. Tables expressing who collaborated with whom appear below:

#### *Collaboration in Japan*

Artist	Art professor
Artist	Three English teachers
English teacher	Art professor

#### *Collaboration in Australia*

Languages Leader	Teacher of Japanese
Languages Education lecturer	Teacher of Japanese
Department for Education project officer	Languages Education Lecturer

#### *International E-collaboration*

<b>Japan</b>	<b>Australia</b>
Artist	Teacher of Japanese
English teacher	Department for Education Project Officer
English teacher	Languages Education lecturer

English teacher	Languages Leader
English teacher	Teacher of Japanese

The authors were participant observers, one of whom was one of the English teachers in Japan, and the other the Department for Education Project Officer. The English teacher coordinated the planning between participants above, by communicating with them both in person and electronically from Japan, and the Education Project Officer coordinated the planning in Australia. The data is considered unstructured because the observation preceded the research (see Cohen et al., 2000, cited in Dornyei, 2007).

#### Rationale for Teaching Language through Movement

The rationale for this methodology was Asher's (2003) Total Physical Response (TPR), during which the teacher provides scaffolding in the target language, and synchronizes physical movement with the language to be learnt; the learner indicates their understanding by responding with physical actions. As Asher (2003) explains, "When noises coming from someone's mouth are followed by a body movement, the learner is able immediately to decipher the meaning of the noise at many levels of awareness including phonology, morphology, syntax and semantics" (p. 130). The importance of embodiment in language learning is also espoused by Haught & McCafferty (2008): "Gestures, proxemics, facial expressions, posture and other mimetic features of interaction are a part of how meaning is encoded in an L2 and obviously deserve further attention" (p. 158-159).

#### Modes and Locales of Collaboration

In this project collaboration took many forms. Firstly, the modes of collaboration comprised both face-to-face and digital interaction. The locales of collaboration were within the Japanese university, between the Japanese and Australian based universities, between the Japanese university and the Australian school, and within the Australian school. Cooperation was enlisted from a range of networks both in Japan and Australia. In Japan collaboration occurred between the volunteer student artist (hereafter the Artist) and the Japanese art professor, and the Artist and three English teachers. The art professor helped the Artist create lesson plans and electronic/digital presentations, and donated art supplies to send to Australia. Two English teachers based at the Japanese university helped prepare the Artist for working in an English-language environment through one-on-one lessons in English, particularly focusing on classroom language. Some of the English language lesson time was also devoted to explaining the Australian Curriculum, The Arts (AC: The Arts) learning area (ACARA, 2011) and to the Artist teaching a mock lesson in Japanese on calligraphy.

In Australia, collaboration was conducted between the Languages Education lecturer and the teacher of Japanese. This nature of this collaboration was face-to-face and involved extended sessions in which

the program overview and detailed weekly teaching and learning program was developed. The collaborative planning focused on meshing the requirements of the Japanese language learning area, with those that would be of sufficient interest to learners, while at the same time being suitably accessible in terms of the linguistic level of beginning students. After identifying the goals of the program for one term, the teacher and lecturer planned the detailed weekly program, including identifying both the arts content and key language content, and the major learning processes and experiences. In designing an integrated program it was particularly crucial to consider what instructional language would be needed in order to teach AC: The Arts content, and enable learners to interact and complete tasks in Japanese. This language content, for example, classroom commands, was taught by the Japanese language teacher prior to the commencement of the integrated program in order to familiarize students with this language and reduce the cognitive load once AC: The Arts based component began. The collaborative planning discussions were iterative, occurring before the arrival of the Artist, and were on-going while the program was being enacted in order to respond to emergent needs. For example, specialist terminology for equipment had been identified and planned prior to the teaching, however it became necessary to introduce further verbs such as 'imagine' and 'bring'.

#### *Collaboration to Provide Funding*

Funding for the project was also a result of international collaboration. The Japanese university provided partial funding for the air ticket: this was dependent upon the recipient attaining at least 500 points on a standardized test. The Japanese university also funded most of the art supplies and the shipping. The Australian school received a small innovation grant from the Department for Education which paid for the Artists' homestay and visa.

#### *E-Collaboration*

A range of parties in both countries contributed via email to the planning. It was necessary for the Artist to familiarize herself with the Australian Curriculum: Languages (Japanese) before arrival. The Project Officer in the Department for Education provided the Australian English specialist on site in Japan with locally developed Australian Curriculum: Languages (Japanese) resource materials including paper copies of the F-10 and 7-10 entry curriculum overviews. The next stage was specific planning for the units of work. The Australian Languages Education lecturer and the Australian teacher of Japanese sent the Artist frameworks for her lesson plans. The English teacher, on site in Japan, helped the Artist organize her lessons according to these frameworks.

Discussions between the teachers in both countries, the project officer, the Languages Leader at the Australian school, the Australian teacher of Japanese and the Artist resulted in the selection of four art forms to be taught in the Australian school: calligraphy, origami, chigiri-e and four frame manga. Chigiri-e is paper art made out of torn origami paper. Four frame manga is a series of four manga images that appears in the daily newspaper in Japan.

E-collaboration permitted a ready exchange of ideas between the Artist and the Australian teacher of Japanese, in order to reach these decisions. One of the first decisions concerned which art forms would be taught. The Australian teacher of Japanese requested calligraphy. The Artist was not a specialist in calligraphy, but she was willing to teach it. Then she suggested Four Frame manga, and chigiri-e. Origami was proposed as a lead in to this activity. The other art form the Artist recommended was woodblock printing, but this was rejected because of safety concerns involving carving wood.

E-collaboration also helped the participants determine the quantity of materials to be shipped from Japan to Australia. One thousand sheets of calligraphy paper, fifteen suzuri ink blocks, three bottles of ink, twenty calligraphy brushes, seventy-five blank paper fans, six sets of special origami, thirteen sets of sixty leaves of Japanese washi paper, and eight sets of ten leaves of ordinary origami were sent to the Australian school.

The Artist provided an extensive description of how she would demonstrate the respective arts forms, and had the paper fans shipped to Australia so the students could produce calligraphy one side and chigiri-e on the other.



The Australian teacher explained how this should fit into the requirements of the Australian Curriculum: Languages for Japanese. For example, he requested that calligraphy should concern the specific kanji for the days of the week that were being taught in class. The Artist prepared the following instructions and vocabulary to use when teaching calligraphy:

#### *Instructions for Calligraphy*

Put ink on the brush;
ふでをぼくじゅうにつける

Reduce the amount of ink on the brush;
ふでからよけいなぼくじゅうをおとす
Hold the brush straight and paint to the bottom right;
ふでをまっすぐにもち、みぎしたへおろす
In the bottom right;
みぎしたに
In the bottom left;
ひだりしたに
Draw a long line to the left bottom;
ひだりしたにむかってながいせんをひく
Half-way down the stroke extend it to the bottom right;
そのはんぶんのところからみぎしたにむかってせんをひく
Put your brush back;
ふでをもとにもどす
End the stroke in a hook, sweep or stop stroke;
まげるようにはらい、ふでをとめる
Pick up the brush;
ふでをもちあげる
Put weights on paper;
はんしにおもりをおく
Clean the brushes
ふでをきれいにする Revision: Chinese characters (Kanji) for days of week, day and month
かいてい：ようび、ひ、つきのかんじ

### *Vocabulary for Calligraphy*

Vocabulary: directions (left, right, top, bottom), brush, ink, ink tray, paper, news print, weight, old clothes
ごい：ほうこう（ひだり、みぎ、うえ、した）、ふで、インク（ぼくじゅう）、すずり、はんし、おもり、ふるぎ

### *Mediation as a Feature of Collaboration*

Each of the cases of collaboration in this project involved mediation, such as the collaboration between the Artist and the English teachers in Japan to promote the learning of English and understanding of the Australian Curriculum: Languages and that between the Australian teacher of Japanese and the education professor. Documents which were produced by this collaboration in two countries consisted of lesson plans enmeshing the requirements of the Australian Curriculum with the language of Japanese art.

Magnan (2008) explains how learning is dependent upon culture: “learning and communication occur only through interaction, which is always culturally dependent”, and describes “the authentic document as a tool to mediate the goal-directed activity of their group” (p.367). Japanese art forms were produced by Australian children with authentic materials sent from Japan. These authentic materials mediated the creation of the Japanese art forms.

### *Benefits of Collaboration*

If mainstream and language teachers share the view that collaboration is beneficial, and achieve a shared understanding of the meaning of collaboration, it can be successful (Bell & Walker, 2012). Specifically, the Artist benefitted in terms of deepening intercultural understanding and improved English language skills. The Australian teacher of Japanese benefitted because he was able to directly work with an artist and learn about teaching Japanese art over a period of five weeks. The students benefitted because they were able to learn about the Japanese language and Japanese art from a Japanese artist, and were able to produce art forms with authentic Japanese materials. These various participants crossed the traditional subject boundaries into hitherto discrete communities of practice, in the way that Tsui and Law (2007) have explained. Most importantly, participants from both countries indicated a willingness to continue with this optional program, which suggests a shared understanding of the benefits of this form of collaboration. Because of the success of the first project, it has been repeated twice, and planning for the fourth one is underway at the time of writing.

### *Addressing Challenges*

Collaboration is not without challenges and there are intercultural and language matters that can impede meaning, interaction and shared understandings and goals. One issue that emerged during the study was cross-cultural differences in pedagogy. Eickhoff and De Costa (2018) explain the need to both acknowledge one's own cultural assumptions about pedagogy and to adapt to the local culture and educational practices. In the current study, the Artist had completed her teacher training in Japan, and her preparation for coming to Australia consisted of adapting her lessons to the requirements of the Australian Curriculum, both face-to-face with the Australian English teacher in Japan, and online with the Australian teacher of Japanese.

A further issue was the mismatch between the complex Japanese language needed for scaffolding art instruction and the limited language skills of beginning L2 Japanese language learners. This gap can be scaffolded by presenting the embodied practice of creating the various art forms, in the manner of Asher's (2003) TPR. It was difficult to train the Artist to simplify her Japanese to a comprehensible level for the L2 learners. Language teachers must make an effort to produce “foreigner talk”, the intermediary classroom language which facilitates second language learners' comprehension. More explicit training for future volunteer artists on incorporating TPR into their lessons is warranted.



Furthermore, the English teachers in Japan needed to equip the Artist with an adequate level of English so that she could communicate with her homestay family and staff members other than the Japanese language teachers. As an art major she did not have the English language proficiency of English language majors. Nevertheless, she worked diligently in the semester before her departure to improve her English proficiency, and succeeded in attaining enough points in the exam in order to receive a travel grant from her university.

Another issue was educating the Artist to appreciate that language learning is not a one-way enterprise. Because English is the perceived global lingua franca, English learners may assume that it is their duty to learn English, but not for native English speakers to learn Japanese (Stephens, 2010). Describing the role of English in Switzerland, Collins (2016) explains that it is a status symbol and knowledge of English can be “a form of one-upmanship” (p. 116); her French speaking interlocutors in Geneva would reply to her in English, three times out of every four, after detecting her accent. Because of the extensive investment of time and resources in learning English, English learners may feel that it is only natural to put their hard-earned skills to use.

Nevertheless, the perception of English as a global lingua franca does not negate the importance of English speakers learning other languages (see Gil, 2010). Helping English learners understand the importance of their language being studied by others, and to see the perspective of these learners, requires them to be informed and educated about the broader multilingual global context. Despite the role of English as a lingua franca, the learning of other languages by speakers of English as a first language along with the development of intercultural understanding, is not only necessary, but also enriching. Intercultural understanding features as one of the seven general capabilities outlined in the Australian Curriculum. Learning another language is one of the best ways to engender intercultural understanding. The seven capabilities, including intercultural understanding, are displayed in the figure below.



Source: Australian Curriculum

### *Future Directions*

This study has provided support for continued interdisciplinary collaboration between language teachers and specialists from other disciplines. Japan currently has a policy of encouraging university students to study abroad. This interdisciplinary project met this objective. As for the Australian context, students of Japanese benefit from learning directly from Japanese artists in the Japanese language. They can learn to appreciate the Japanese aesthetic in the language of the artist, and to create original artworks once they have mastered the basics of the domain: “creativity involves changing a way of doing things, or a way of thinking, and that in turn requires having mastered the old ways of doing or thinking” (Csikszentmihalyi, 2013, p. 155).

### Conclusions

Throughout this project, synergies were observed through collaboration on multiple levels, such as modes of interaction, between institutions in different countries and their respective educational cultures, between institutions within the same country, and within institutions. The objective of the collaboration was to enhance educational outcomes of the students. Through collaboration in various modes and between a myriad of partners and discrete communities of practice, the teaching team, the Artist and the teacher of Japanese, were able to provide a program of lessons that enhanced students’ learning of both Japanese art forms and Japanese language. Then the students were able to respond to this delivery by creating original art forms using authentic Japanese materials through the mediation provided by the Artist. This outcome was made possible because of the behind-the-scenes collaboration of partners of diverse specializations and their commitment to intercultural dialogue and international engagement.

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Acknowledgement: We would like to express our gratitude to Associate Professor Osamu Sahara for his assistance to the Artist in preparing the lessons and art materials for the lessons which were conducted in the Australian classroom.